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ABSTRACT

In the cities of Cleveland, Ohio, and Milwaukee, Wisconsin, more than 4,500 students are receiving public money in the form of scholarships and vouchers to attend private schools. The Milwaukee school choice program began in 1989, and the Cleveland scholarship program began in 1996. These school choice programs have spurred much debate, with proponents contending that the programs add opportunities for children and promise to improve education through competition, while opponents argue that diverting public money to private schools undercuts public education and promotes disparity. A study sought consensus on guidelines to hold private schools of choice accountable. A national panel of academic researchers was asked to design a research method and analyze the results. The method involved face-to-face interviews with 295 parents, teachers, administrators, and elected officials, along with 771 telephone surveys conducted with a randomly generated sample of taxpayers in Ohio and Wisconsin. The study found that an overwhelming majority of taxpayers in both Ohio and Wisconsin approve the concept of private school choice. Most favor extending the program statewide, allowing religious schools to participate and allowing all (not just low-income) families to participate. The vast majority of taxpayers believed each choice school should be required to make an array of information available to the public. Two appendixes include the interview questions, and the telephone survey questions. (SS)

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Public Policy Forum

Researching Community Issues

Public Policy Forum Report

Choice School Accountability: A Consensus of Views in Ohio & Wisconsin

February, 1998

Funded by:
The Joyce Foundation
The Faye McBeath Foundation

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Public Policy Forum

Researching Community Issues

Choice School Accountability: A Consensus of Views in Ohio and Wisconsin

The Public Policy Forum

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Choice School Accountability:
A Consensus of Views in Ohio and Wisconsin

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Choice School Accountability:
A Consensus of Views in Ohio and Wisconsin

Executive Summary

Unlike their counterparts in other cities, poor parents in Cleveland and Milwaukee have a choice: They can send their children to public schools or to private "choice" schools. Choice school proponents contend that this idea not only improves opportunities for participating children but also promises to improve education for everyone by making it more competitive. Opponents contend that diverting public money to private schools undercuts public education and promotes disparity. Because the debate has focused on *whether* choice schools should exist, there has been little discussion about accountability for those that *do*.

This study sought consensus on a method to hold private choice schools accountable to the children that attend them and to the public that supports them. Our objective was to find guidelines that reasonable people could agree are necessary. To accomplish this, we assembled a national panel of academic researchers to design a research method and analyze the results. Then we conducted face-to-face interviews with 295 choice and public school stakeholders (mostly parents and educators) in Cleveland and Milwaukee. Finally, we conducted telephone interviews with a representative sample of 771 taxpayers in Ohio and Wisconsin. We found: (1) strong public support for the concept of private choice schools, and (2) a strong consensus on accountability guidelines.

Here is a summary of the findings:

- An overwhelming majority of taxpayers in both Ohio and Wisconsin approve of the concept of private school choice. Most favor *expansion* of private school choice in three ways: (1) extending the program statewide rather than limiting it to Cleveland and Milwaukee, (2) allowing religious schools to participate and (3) allowing all children to participate, not just those from low-income families.
- The vast majority of taxpayers in both states believe that each participating choice school should be *required* to make an array of information about the school available to the public.
- Asked who should be responsible for gathering the information and making it available to the public, 70% approved of the concept of a public board consisting of representatives of both public and private choice schools. In contrast, a small majority (53%) favor the option of involving the state department of education, and a minority (33%) favored leaving the task to a purely private entity.

- Among possible sanctions for non-compliance with reporting requirements, the overwhelming majority of those surveyed favored a probationary period; the more punitive sanctions of a fine or immediate loss of taxpayer money were less likely to be favored. Almost no respondents agreed with the view that there should be no formal sanctions.

The findings, based on the research results and analysis of their implications, led to the following accountability guidelines:

1. Public Information -- Choice schools need to make information available to the public on the school mission, philosophy, governing structure, curriculum and teaching methods; the qualifications of teachers and administrators; the aggregate scores of pupils on standardized tests; how money is budgeted and spent; and the attendance, graduation, expulsion and suspension rates.
2. Validation -- A public board consisting of representatives of private choice schools and public schools should be created to gather the required information about choice schools and make it available to the public.
3. Consequences -- Private choice schools should be granted a one-year probationary period in order to meet the reporting requirements. Failure to comply after one year should result in loss of taxpayer funds.

There was no consensus on the following issues that merit further discussion:

- Should private choice schools be allowed to require parents to work as volunteers in the school?
- Should choice schools be required to make their meetings open to the public?
- Should choice schools be allowed to charge parents for the costs above those covered by the taxpayer contribution?
- When choice schools get more applicants than they have vacancies, should they be allowed to choose which applicants they will enroll or should they be required to conduct a lottery?
- Should choice schools only be permitted to hire state-certified teachers?

Choice School Accountability: A Consensus of Views in Ohio and Wisconsin.

Introduction

Today, in the cities of Cleveland, Ohio, and Milwaukee, Wisconsin, more than 4,500 students are receiving public money in the form of scholarships and vouchers to attend private schools. The Milwaukee school choice program began in 1989, and the Cleveland scholarship program began in 1996. These school choice programs, as they are commonly referred to, have spurred much debate and controversy. The controversy centers on opponents who view choice as a further drain on already limited public school funding and proponents who view choice as a means for improving educational opportunities for all children.

Beyond this ongoing debate, there has been little discussion focused on the specifics of the implementation or accountability of choice programs. Ardent choice proponents have argued that parental satisfaction is accountability enough for private choice schools. The underlying basis of this argument is that unsatisfied parents will withdraw their children and the school will fold. Ardent public school advocates, on the other hand, do not address accountability issues since they believe choice programs should be abolished. This has left a gap in the middle that needs to be filled with meaningful discussion and research that examines accountability issues from a practical point of view, and which strives for the inclusion of such issues into the implementation of choice programs.

This study seeks to fill that gap by examining the issue of school choice accountability in Cleveland and Milwaukee. The Public Policy Forum, under the direction of a panel of eight academic experts, has spent the last year examining these two school choice programs from the standpoint of accountability.[1] We did this by developing a series of accountability guidelines from data gathered in 295 face-to-face interviews with parents, teachers, administrators and elected officials along with responses from 771 telephone surveys conducted with a randomly generated sample of taxpayers in Ohio and Wisconsin. In this paper we first provide a brief background on the school choice programs in Cleveland and Milwaukee. Next, we examine the issue of educational accountability and specifically how it relates to school choice. We then discuss the methodology and data collection techniques that were used in carrying out this study. Finally, we highlight the findings and make recommendations for accountability guidelines to assist policy makers considering or reviewing the issue of school choice in their states.

Private School Choice Programs in Cleveland and Milwaukee

School choice, the opportunity to select from alternative schools an appropriate education for one's child, varies greatly depending on the size of one's income and on the number of options available in the system of public and private schools in one's region of residence. These options may include traditional neighborhood schools, magnet schools, alternative

schools for special needs children, charter schools, subsidized home schooling, and a broad range of parochial and secular private schools.

Many believe that parents who reside in poor central city neighborhoods have less choice for their children than do more affluent parents living in the suburbs. They argue that even central city private schools usually have only limited financial assistance to offer, and this tends to be allocated preferentially to students whose enrollment will enhance the school's reputation or accomplishments.

Partly in response to this perceived inequity, coalitions of conservative and liberal state legislators, first in Wisconsin and then Ohio, have sponsored the passage of experimental programs that now provide financial aid, in the form of vouchers or scholarships, for a limited number of low-income students to attend private schools.[2] The programs are restricted to students living in each state's largest and most troubled school district, Milwaukee and Cleveland, respectively. Details of each program presented below reveal important similarities and differences. In both programs eligibility to participate depends on family financial need; the major difference is that in Milwaukee the funds can be used only for nonsectarian schools.

Milwaukee Private School Choice

The Milwaukee Parental Choice Program, created in 1989, was the first private school choice program in the nation to provide public funds for private school enrollment. The choice law authorizes a limited number of low-income students from Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS), to attend private, nonsectarian schools within the City of Milwaukee. Legislation was passed to expand the program to parochial schools. However, this expansion was challenged in the courts, and is currently under litigation. The state pays the private school an amount equal to the per pupil student aid it offers MPS for the school year, regardless of the tuition charged at the school; no further tuition can be charged the students, parents or guardians. The state then reduces the MPS general equalization aid by the same amount. The voucher is currently worth up to $4,700.

The program limits choice participation to children whose family incomes do not exceed 175% of the federal poverty level. New students entering the program cannot have been enrolled in a public school outside of the MPS district or a private school, other than as a state-sponsored student in a choice school, in the previous school year. Eligible schools may not discriminate among choice students on the basis of their race, religion, gender, prior achievement or prior behavioral records. Currently choice students can only make up 65% of the school's enrollment. If a particular class is oversubscribed, selection must be on a random basis, although, in practice, siblings of students selected for other grades are exempt from the random selection requirement. Choice schools are exempted by court ruling from the Education for All Handicapped Children Act.

In the first year of the choice program, 341 choice students were enrolled in seven participating schools. During the first four years, the legal maximum enrollment was set at

1% of MPS enrollment. This was subsequently changed to 1.5%, which accounted for 1,476 students enrolled in 17 participating choice schools during the 1995-96 school year. A new law that would expand the number of participants, and allow religious schools to participate in the program, is being challenged in court. In 1997-98 more than 1,500 choice students are enrolled in 23 participating choice schools. Choice program participating schools must meet at least one of the following standards:

1. At least 70% of the pupils in the program advance one grade level each year;
2. The private school's average attendance rate for pupils in the program is at least 90%;
3. At least 80% of the pupils in the program demonstrate "significant academic progress;"
4. At least 70% of the families of pupils in the program meet parental involvement criteria established by the private school.

During the first five years of the school choice program, the State Department of Public Instruction (DPI) was required to conduct an annual financial audit and performance evaluation of the participating schools. Under the new law, each private school participating in the program is subject to uniform financial accounting standards established by DPI and annually shall submit to the department an independent financial audit of the private school. However, the annual performance evaluation was changed to one performed every five years. The next evaluation of the Milwaukee voucher program by DPI must be presented to the legislature by January 15, 2000. During the interim, since DPI will no longer be required to gather annual performance data, it will be left up to the schools to collect the data.

Cleveland Scholarship Program

A similar program began in the fall of 1996 in Cleveland, though the money provided to parents is called a scholarship rather than a voucher. Participating children in Cleveland can attend either public or private, sectarian or non-sectarian schools. Scholarships are offered to students in kindergarten - fourth grade with the program intended to run through their eighth grade year. The scholarship is worth either 75% or 90% of tuition, depending on family income with a maximum allotment of $2,500. The Cleveland school district does not lose state funds as a result of a reduction in their average daily attendance.

Seventy-five percent of choice recipients must be from families at or below 100% of the federal poverty level. Another 25% are chosen from those families who apply that demonstrate incomes between 100% and 200% of federal poverty standards. A lottery drawing is held for eligible applicants. Preference is given to students from low-income families, however scholarships will be open to students above the low-income level if spaces exist in the participating schools.

In its first year of operation 1,800 students were recipients of scholarships and were enrolled at 51 participating choice schools. The majority of these schools were sectarian schools.

Twenty percent of these students attended a private school in the previous year. In the 1997-1998 school year 3,000 Cleveland children are attending 56 private religious or non-sectarian schools. Twenty-four percent of these students attended a private school in the previous year. In the spring of 1997 a state court found the program to violate the constitutional separation of church and state. However, the Ohio Supreme Court granted the state a stay on the initial ruling so that the program could continue while the case is appealed.

During the first year of the program, the state superintendent contracted with independent researchers to evaluate the pilot program. In September, 1997, Green, Howell and Peterson released "An Evaluation of the Cleveland Scholarship Program," reporting the results of a survey of a random sample of parents who applied for the Cleveland Scholarship and test-score results for students attending two schools that participated in the scholarship program. Another evaluation of the Cleveland Scholarship program, using test-score data from all the participating schools, will be released during the 1997-1998 school year.

A Discussion of Accountability

Schools can be held accountable in many different ways. For example, accountability can be a means for measuring educational quality and the outcomes of the education process. Accountability can also focus on a holistic educational system. In this case, assessment data are only a part of the total accountability process (Darling-Hammond and Ascher 1991). Furthermore, accountability can focus on filling an information gap so that all relevant constituencies are involved in a dialog about school performance. In this manner accountability information about schools can serve as the basis for communication and action (Henry 1996).

Some proponents of school choice argue that the development of accountability standards will lead to significant state intrusion into private school operations and that the development of accountability guidelines is just another political device for eliminating school choice. These proponents believe that parent satisfaction is accountability enough. Schools that meet the needs of parents will succeed; poor schools will fail (Mitchell 1996, p. 11). Other proponents argue that you cannot find a more regulated system then the public schools and that this regulation has no correlation with student achievement (statements made at Wisconsin Assembly Hearing of the Committee on Urban Education, February 28, 1996).

Some opponents of school choice, on the other hand, argue that private choice schools must be held accountable for the expenditure of public funds. Opponents of choice commented in interviews that private choice schools operate on an uneven playing field. Some state legislators and union representatives in both Ohio and Wisconsin expressed the belief that unless private choice schools are required to operate under the same system of regulations as public schools, school choice will result in further inequalities along socio-economic lines, as well as further racial segregation.[3]

The view that parent satisfaction is accountability enough appears to fall far short of sufficient accountability to a number of people. For example, when two choice schools in Milwaukee closed during the 1995-1996 academic year, a key legislative leader on choice and the governor of Wisconsin, a choice supporter, announced plans to introduce legislation to make choice schools more accountable to the state (see *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, February 13, 1996). In addition, the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, in a February 12th 1996 editorial wrote that, "...the present accountability requirements (*for choice schools*) are ridiculously scant." John Chubb and Terry Moe, strong supporters of school choice, in their 1990 ground breaking book, *Politics Markets and America's Schools*, wrote that a parent information center should be created to disseminate information about choice schools (Chubb and Moe 1990, p.225).

Our intent is to find a consensus on the information and procedures necessary for accountability. We hope to find a middle ground between the view that private choice schools should operate completely free of accountability guidelines and the view that private choice schools should duplicate the regulations that are in place for public schools. We address accountability by focusing on four of its components. First, what kinds of information individuals believe should be available for holding schools accountable; second, what is the best means for determining the validity of this information; third, what kind of criteria, if any, should schools that participate in choice adhere to; and finally, what consequences should exist if schools fail to adhere to these guidelines.

We next describe the methodology used in our research. This is followed by a discussion of the major findings. We then make recommendations for accountability guidelines based on a consensus found in our interviews, surveys and analysis of our academic panel. Finally we discuss areas where we are unable to offer a consensus. These areas are worthy of further debate and analysis.

Methodology and Data Collection

Given the politically volatile nature of school choice policy, the academic panel that directed this project felt it was critical that individuals directly or indirectly involved in the choice issue be an integral part of the formulation of any school choice accountability guidelines. The panel did not create a list of accountability guidelines and test the feasibility of these guidelines. Instead the panel created a research design that focused first on the concerns of stakeholders in holding schools accountable. This stakeholder approach is distinguished from other types of research because the key findings are the result of testing hypotheses developed by individuals who are directly or indirectly affected by a school choice program, rather than exclusively by members of the academic community or a legislative body (see Worthen and Sanders 1987, for a discussion of this method). We believe that if individuals affected by the development of school choice guidelines are included in the process, we can increase the probability of establishing

widely accepted guidelines. Previous research has shown that if these groups are included in the development of guidelines, there is a better chance the accountability standards will be perceived as unbiased (Oakes 1986).

In choosing the stakeholders we asked the following question: Who holds a stake in selecting the criteria and variables that will be used in establishing private school choice accountability? Using this question we viewed the inclusion of the following groups, representing both public and private choice schools, as imperative. This first group included school administrators, parents, students and teachers.[4] We viewed these stakeholders as having extensive knowledge about the issues surrounding school choice accountability and a vested interest in the outcomes of this study. In this report we referred to this set of stakeholders as school-based respondents. The inclusion of groups from the broader community was also considered important. This second group included school board members, members of the business community, legislators and teachers association members. We referred to these stakeholders as the community-based respondents. We also included a third group, taxpayers in Ohio and Wisconsin, because taxpayer money is being used to fund this form of school choice.[5]

We took a two-phased approach to developing the school choice accountability guidelines. The school-based respondents and the community respondents played a major role in the first phase of this study. The views of taxpayers were the focus of the second phase.

Phase One: Interviews with School-Based Respondents

Involvement from the school-based respondents was obtained through one on one, face-to-face interviews with administrators, teachers and parents. These interviews focused on: What kinds of information did individuals believe should be available for holding schools accountable; second, what is the best means for determining the validity of the information; third, what kind of criteria, if any, should schools that participate in choice adhere to; and finally, what consequences should exist if schools fail to adhere to these guidelines.

We targeted our interviews with school-based respondents by first choosing five public and five private choice schools each in Cleveland and Milwaukee. The chosen schools were representative of the racial, economic and geographic diversity of the two cities.[6] We next conducted interviews with the administrators of these schools and obtained lists of teachers and parents to interview who were affiliated with the school. Therefore, the majority of our interviews with parents, teachers and administrators came from individuals affiliated with one of these 20 public and private choice schools in Cleveland and Milwaukee.[7] In addition, the majority of our interviews were conducted with people affiliated with primary school education. However, we did conduct interviews with individuals affiliated with three high schools. We have fewer high schools due to the fact that choice, as it has developed in Cleveland and Milwaukee, has largely focused on elementary-school-aged children.[8]

We asked parents, teachers and administrators in Cleveland and Milwaukee a series of 14 open-ended questions and one closed-ended question. The questions were directed toward the perspective of parents and were rephrased for teachers and administrators who were asked their perception of what information parents want to know about a school (Appendix A). Table 1 illustrates the number of completed interviews by school-based respondents.

Table 1. Number of Interviews by School-Based Respondents.

	All	Cleveland Private Choice School	Milwaukee Private Choice School	Cleveland Public School	Milwaukee Public School
Parent	153	34	40	35	44
School Administrator	25	7	7	5	6
Teacher	92	22	22	26	22
Total	270	63	69	66	72

Phase One: Interviews with Community Respondents

Face-to-face interviews were also conducted with the community respondents. However, given their indirect involvement in the day to day operation of schools we interviewed a smaller sample of community respondents.[9] This group includes school board members, state legislators, public school union representatives and choice supporters (See Table 2). These individuals were chosen because of their involvement in school choice. Each of the individuals interviewed had a vested stake in the issue of school choice accountability. In our interviews with community respondents we used a semi-structured interview format. We focused on two types of questions: the individuals specific interest and involvement with school choice and how they believe private schools that participate in choice should be held accountable.

Table 2. Number of Interviews by Community Respondents.

	All	Cleveland	Milwaukee
School Board Member	7	4	3
State Legislator/City Council Member	5	2	3
Public School Union Representative	4	2	2
Private Choice Organization Representative	7	3	4
Member of Business Community	2	0	2
Total	25	11	14

Phase Two: Telephone Surveys with Ohio and Wisconsin Taxpayers

Sample copies of the interview were sent to our academic panel. These individuals analyzed and categorized the data which basically called for grouping the hundreds of responses into a manageable number of categories capturing all of the variations in the responses.[10] The categories that were developed by the panel served as the framework for the final coding.[11] The findings from the interview data guided the creation of a survey design that was administered by telephone to a random sample of 771 taxpayers from Ohio and Wisconsin[12] (See Table 3). The survey questionnaire tested whether there was widespread acceptance of the accountability information needs that were deemed important by the school-based and community respondents in the face-to-face interviews. Please see Appendix B for a copy of the survey.

Table 3. Percentage Distribution of Sampled Respondents and of the Adult Population in Ohio and Wisconsin on Selected Social Characteristics.[13]

Characteristic	Ohio Sample	Ohio Population	WI Sample	WI Population
Percent of Adult Population, Age, 35 and above	65%	62%	67%	63%
Gender, female	55%	52%	53%	51%
Ethnicity, African American	12%	11%	12%	5%
Median Household Income	$39,000	$36,000	$39,000	$38,000
Education, 1 or more years of college	30%	22%	28%	16%

Findings

The findings we present in this report combine the data we have gathered in our interviews with our survey data. We will first briefly discuss the findings from the school respondent interviews. For a more detailed look at the school respondent data see *School Choice in Cleveland and Milwaukee: What Parents Look For*, November 1997, Public Policy Forum.

Interviews with School Respondents

There is essential agreement among school-based respondents, across both public and private schools, on the information parents need to hold a school accountable. We list some of the major findings below.

- Information on the school's program, primarily its curriculum and method of instruction, is the most common piece of information mentioned in our interviews (See Table 4).
- Information on teachers is the next most common response by parents (See Table 4).
- The other criteria that parents mention, in order of frequency after school program and teacher characteristics, are school characteristics, such as class size and make-up of student body; general student outcomes, such as development of lifetime skills and advancement to the next grade level; safety and discipline at the school; standardized test scores; level of parent involvement and the school's reputation (See Table 4).

Table 4. Criteria Recommended by School-Based Respondents in Cleveland and Milwaukee.

	PARENTS (N=153)	TEACHERS (N=92)	SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS (N=25)
School Program	59%	67%	60%
Teachers	45%	45%	24%
Outcomes General	35%	39%	60%
Outcomes Test Scores	15%	12%	40%
School Characteristics	31%	30%	44%
Safety and Discipline	28%	35%	28%
Reputation of School	9%	20%	28%
Parent Involvement	12%	18%	8%

Note: The total percentage in each column exceeds 100% because respondents on average mentioned between two and three criteria.

In a final closed-ended question we presented the interviewees with a list of possible sources for gathering the requested information about schools and making sure that it was accurate. We report below the percent of respondents who agreed or disagreed with an item. The main findings of this section are:

- The organizations that received the greatest level of support in order of frequency were a privately run parent information center and the state department of education (See Table 5).
- The private schools themselves and an accreditation agency received support from 54% and 50% of the respondents respectively (See Table 5).
- Few interviewees, less than 9%, agreed that parents should be left with this responsibility (See Table 5).

Table 5. School-Based Responses to Who Should be Responsible for Gathering Information.

	Agree	Disagree
A Privately Run Parent Information Center	64%	36%
The State Department of Education	62%	38%
The Private Schools Themselves	54%	46%
An Accreditation Agency	50%	50%
No Agency Needs to be Responsible. Parents will decide for themselves and poor schools will fail	9%	91%

Note: N=268. There were 49 missing cases for this question.

What we learned from interviewing these 270 school-based respondents is quite intriguing. We learned that parents want information on a school's program and teachers. To a lesser degree, parents want to know about general student outcomes, school characteristics, safety and discipline, parental involvement and test scores. However, their interest in these factors paled in comparison to their great interest in school program and teachers. We also learned that the most popular choice for who should gather and report this information was a privately run parent information center or the state department of education.

Interviews with Community Respondents

Because of the semi-structured format and the relatively small number of interviewees, we report only the dominant themes that were mentioned. The community respondents were much more focused on who should be responsible for gathering the information and the criteria that should be in place for determining who should participate in choice. They were less concerned with the types of information individuals were interested in obtaining.

Two common concerns were voiced by members of the choice community. The first is that parents should be trusted to choose. Parents should be given the responsibility for holding the schools accountable. The information needed should be determined by the individual parent, and the parent should be given full responsibility for gathering and ensuring the accuracy of the information. The second common theme was expressed in the following manner: There needs to be an avoidance of bureaucratic entanglements to the largest extent possible. It is critical that accountability guidelines should "First Do No Harm," as expressed by one individual. The concern is that the state legislatures will create a system of accountable requirements that kills the program.

Two different themes expressed by strong choice opponents were the following. First, more information needs to be available about schools that participate in choice. These community respondents believed that information about schools should be made public.

As one individual commented, "It is impossible to have a program receiving public money and not hold those receiving the money accountable for those expenditures." Second, several individuals expressed a strong feeling that schools that participate in choice should be held to the same standards and regulations as public schools. For example, a number of opponents of choice felt strongly that teachers working in private schools that accept public money must be state certified. Opponents of school choice also felt it was imperative that schools participating in choice select their students using a lottery system. They expressed a strong concern that schools allowed to select students would unfairly screen out students they considered the least desirable.

Community respondents focused on the criteria choice schools should follow in order to participate in the choice program, rather than information needs. However, there was little agreement over what these criteria should be. This was true especially among proponents of school choice.

For instance, two community respondents who are strong choice advocates differed on the issue of who should be responsible for gathering information and ensuring that it was accurate. One individual commented that membership in a private accreditation agency should be the sole means for holding private schools accountable. Another individual, also a choice supporter, felt that accreditation would destroy some private choice schools that are doing an excellent job. In addition, a number of proponents of school choice disagreed on whether students should be admitted using a lottery or if a school should be able to choose who they enrolled. We also found disagreement among proponents on whether choice schools should require parents to volunteer time as a criteria for enrollment. Finally, we found disagreement among proponents of choice over whether schools should charge participating parents for the costs of education not covered by the voucher or scholarship.

How do we connect these views of accountability with the needs of taxpayers for holding private choice schools accountable? Our next phase of research focused on providing an answer to this question. We explore the findings from our survey research and examine ways for reaching consensus in the next section.

Telephone Survey with Ohio and Wisconsin Taxpayers

As mentioned earlier our survey questions were designed by the panel of experts using the findings from the school and community respondents as a guide. For example, instead of creating a list of possible items that private choice schools would be required to report, we took the items that were mentioned in our interviews and created a questionnaire designed to find whether there was support for mandatory reporting of these items.

As Table 6 illustrates, a great majority of taxpayers in Ohio and Wisconsin support school choice. Seventy-six percent of those surveyed support school choice and 53% support expansion to all children regardless of income.[14] Eighty-three percent believe

that religious schools should be allowed to participate in a choice program. In addition, 77% of those surveyed in Ohio and 74% in Wisconsin believe the current school choice programs should be expanded to include all school districts in the state. [15] It was important for developing accountability guidelines that we found essential agreement among these proponents and opponents of school choice on accountability information.

Table 6. Percent Who Agree with Following Statements.

I favor providing tax money to parents to allow their children to attend private schools.	Religious schools should be allowed to participate in a choice program.	Choice programs should be expanded to include all school districts in the state?
76	83	76

Some of the major findings of the survey are the following:

Overall Findings

- Information Requirements:

  -Three out of four people surveyed believe private schools participating in choice should report information on the qualifications of teachers and administrators, how money is budgeted and spent and the results of an annual financial audit (See Table 7).
  -The other items, which between 65-74% of the interviewees believe must be reported include, in order of frequency, the curriculum, the graduation rate, the methods of teaching, the mission and philosophy of a school, the school's governing structure, scores on state standardized tests and student attendance rate (See Table 7).

- Who Should Report this Information:

  -Seventy percent of interviewees believe a public board consisting of representatives from both the private choice and public schools should be responsible for gathering and reporting information on choice schools (See Table 8).

- Possible Sanctions for Schools Who Withhold Information:

  -Eighty-three percent of respondents believe that a school that does **not** follow the mandated reporting requirements should be granted a one-year probationary period in order to meet the requirement (See Table 10).

- Compliance Criteria:

-Approximately 73% of those surveyed believe that teachers in participating choice schools should be certified by the state (See Table 11).
-Eighty-six percent of those surveyed believe that private schools participating in a choice program should be required to make their meetings open to the public (See Table 11).
-Sixty-six percent of those surveyed believe that private schools participating in a choice program should be allowed to charge for costs above those covered by the taxpayer contribution (See Table 11).
-Approximately 66% of those surveyed believe that private schools participating in choice should be allowed to require parents to work as volunteers in the school (See Table 11).
-Thirty-five percent of those surveyed believe that private schools participating in a choice program should be allowed to choose which students they will enroll (See Table 11).

Information Requirements

In our survey, we first presented taxpayers with a list of possible items that schools could be required to report to the public. Specifically we asked the following question that was rephrased for residents of Ohio. *In Wisconsin some low-income parents receive money to pay tuition at private schools. These private schools are called choice schools. I will read a list of things that choice schools might be asked to report to the public. Please tell me whether you as a taxpayer think each item should be voluntary or mandatory for a private choice school to report the information to the public. Do you feel it should be voluntary or mandatory for private choice schools to report (Read item below) to the public.*[16] In this section we will take a detailed look at these responses. We will explore differences based on race, income, support for school choice, state of residence, gender and whether the respondent has school-aged children.

Our school and community respondent interviews indicated that information on school programs and teachers was the most important for parents. Given this importance, it was no surprise to find that over 65% of the survey respondents felt reporting of school curriculum and methods of teaching should be mandatory. We found even more consistency with the school respondents about the desire to have information on the qualifications of teachers and administrators. Eighty-five percent of the survey respondents believed this information should be mandatory.

There was overwhelming support for mandatory reporting of state standardized test results (75%) and graduation rate (75%). On the other hand, mandatory reporting of graduate placement was only selected by 27% of those surveyed. These findings are somewhat at odds with our school and community respondents data. In that analysis, standardized test score results were only found to be an important source of information about a school by 15% of parents, 12% of teachers and 40% of the school administrators

we interviewed. In those interviews we found that parents were very interested in the progress of their own children and much less interested in aggregate measures of school achievement. The information most likely to be requested by the taxpayers surveyed about private schools that accept public money was not the same information individual parents wanted when making a decision about a school. Most panel members were not surprised by this finding. As one panel member stated, "Parents may believe their children will do well in a school if there is a good match, regardless of the achievement of other students. Alternatively, taxpayers care about all the students and the only common metric for judging achievement is a state or national test."

Table 7. Information About Private Choice Schools, Rank-Ordered by Percentage of Respondents Who Believe its Reporting Should be Mandatory Rather than Voluntary[17]

Item	Mandatory
D. The qualifications of teachers and administrators	85
F. How money is budgeted and spent	78
K. The results of an annual financial audit	78
E. The graduation rate	75
M. The scores on state standardized tests	75
N. Student attendance rate	73
B. The curriculum	73
L. The school's governing structure.	70
G. The methods of teaching	66
H. The mission and philosophy of a school	65
I. Number of students suspended/expelled annually	61
O. Teacher turnover	55
A. Class size	55
P. The requirements for parent involvement	49
J. The racial or ethnic makeup of the student body	33
C. The economic background of the student body	29
Q. Graduate placement	27

Another area of some disagreement is the strong desire by those surveyed to make mandatory reporting of how money is budgeted and spent and the results of an annual financial audit. Seventy-eight percent of those surveyed believe reporting this information should be mandatory. This is a much different response than our school respondent interviews. In that phase of research less than 3% indicated that having information about the financial matters of a school was important. Again most panel members did not find these results contradictory. As one member commented, "Parents may have less interest in the financial affairs of a school because it is not their money supporting it. Taxpayers, however, want fiscal responsibility when their tax dollars are at issue."

We point out these differences but emphasize the high degree of agreement between the school and community respondents and the taxpayer survey. For example, we found high interest among school and community respondents and taxpayers alike in the mission and philosophy of a school, the number of students suspended and expelled annually, class size, teacher turnover and the school's governing structure. In addition, in both phases of research we found limited interest in the racial or ethnic makeup, the requirements for parent involvement and the economic background of the student body.

Mandatory Reporting: Group Differences

In this section we report differences in support for mandatory reporting of various items. We divided the respondents into groups in order to answer the questions: Are there statistically significant differences across racial groups, by gender, by income, by state of residence, by support for private school choice, educational levels of respondents and by whether the respondent had school-aged children?[18] We found that regardless of taxpayer differences in race, income level or support of school choice there was strong support for mandatory reporting of particular items. The exceptions are discussed below.

We found that compared to whites, African Americans are more likely to support mandatory reporting of the racial or ethnic makeup of the student body, (43% vs. 32%) and the requirements for parent involvement (64% vs. 47%). We also examined differences in mandatory reporting requirements by income level. The only area in which we found a statistically significant difference was in mandatory reporting of standardized test results. Lower income respondents were less likely to believe this information should be required. However, even given this statistically significant difference, we still found two-thirds of low income respondents supporting mandatory reporting of standardized test scores.

We also looked at differences between individuals who expressed support or opposition to the school choice program.[19] Individuals who oppose choice were more likely to believe in mandatory reporting of the economic background of the student body (40% compared to 26%), the racial or ethnic makeup of the student body (39% compared to 32%) and graduate placement (35% compared to 25%). However, the percent supporting these mandatory reporting requirements did not exceed 50%.

Another difference that we hypothesized might exist was between parents of school-aged children and other taxpayers. In only one item did we find a statistically significant difference. Parents of school-aged children are more likely than other taxpayers to believe that the methods of teaching should be a mandatory reporting requirement of private choice schools (73% of parents want this information compared with approximately 59% of other taxpayers).[20]

We also looked for differences by state of residence, education levels and gender and did not find any statistically significant differences based on these variables. This degree of

consistency in desire for mandatory reporting requirements was important for developing acceptable guidelines.

Who Should Report Information

In our survey, we next presented interviewees with a list of possible means for gathering the required information and making it available (See Table 8). Specifically, we asked the following question: *If private choice schools are required to report information to the public, somebody has to gather this information and make it available. Do you think (Read first organization list below) should be given this job?*

Table 8. Percentage of Respondents Who Support Each Possible Information Source.[21]

Item	Yes
A. A public board consisting of representatives from both private choice schools and public schools	70
F. An accreditation agency, which is a membership organization that grants accreditation status to schools	54
B. The state department of education	53
E. A coordinating council made up of representatives of private choice schools	47
D. The private choice schools themselves, rather than an organization	43
C. A privately run parent information center	37
G. Individual parents themselves, rather than an organization	33

Seventy percent of those surveyed indicated that they believed a public board consisting of representatives from both private choice schools and public schools should be given this task. The inclusion of this method for reporting information grew out of our interviews with the community respondents. This method was especially popular with proponents of private school choice. We did not include this option in our interviews with school-based respondents because at that time we did not know of the popularity of this approach.

The next most popular option in our taxpayer survey was an accreditation agency. This was followed by the state department of education; 53% of those surveyed supported this source for gathering and making information available. In our school-based interviews the accreditation option received support from half of the individuals we interviewed. The state Department of Education was a popular choice in our school-based interviews. Two thirds of those we interviewed supported this method.

There was consistently low support in school-based interviews and the taxpayer survey for having parents gather this information on their own. Only one out of ten school-based respondents we interviewed supported this option, and three out of ten taxpayers surveyed supported this option. However, proponents of choice, in our community-based interviews, felt that parents should be given the opportunity to gather this information on their own.

Another point of disagreement between the taxpayer survey and our school-based interviews focused on a privately run parent information center. In our school-based interviews we found that two-thirds approved of this method. However, only one-third of our taxpayer survey respondents supported this method.

We next asked those surveyed the following question: *Of these organizations please tell me which is the best one to be responsible for this task. I will read to you the list.* In Table 9 we report the percen. supporting the various organizations. By asking the question in this manner, we required the respondent to make a choice among the available options. In this analysis the public board consisting of representatives from both private choice and public schools c ce again came out on top. The state department of education was the next most popular. It was chosen by approximately 25% of those surveyed. The other options, including accreditation, were chosen by less than 12% of those surveyed. Support for these organizations held regardless of taxpayer differences in race, income level or attitude toward school choice.[22]

Table 9. Percent of Those Surveyed Who Believe Institution is Best One to be Responsible for Gathering and Reporting Information on Private Choice Schools.

Item	Percent Selecting Item
A. Public board consisting of representatives from both private choice and public schools	31
B. The state department of education	25
G. Individual parents themselves, rather than an organization	11
F. An accreditation agency, which is a membership organization that grants accreditation status to schools	10
D. The private choice schools themselves, rather than an organization	8
E. A coordinating council made up of representatives of private choice schools	7
C. A privately run parent information center	6
H. Don't Know/Refused	2

Possible Sanctions for Schools that Withhold Information

We also asked survey respondents three questions about what should be done if a school does not follow the reporting requirements. We presented the survey participants with three options and asked them to tell us if they agreed or disagreed with the options (See Table 10). Our results indicate 83% of respondents believed that schools that do **not** follow the mandated reporting requirements should be granted a one-year probationary period in order to meet the requirement. Only 36% believed that a fine should be given to the school. However, 57% believed that a school should lose its eligibility for taxpayer money. African Americans were less likely to believe a school should lose its eligibility for taxpayer funds, (43% compared to 59% for other respondents).

Table 10. Percentage of Respondents Approving Each Possible Sanction for Schools Withholding Required Information.

Sanction	Agree
Probation	83
Fine	36
Lose Eligibility	57

Compliance Criteria

In addition to the questions about mandatory reporting requirements and who should gather and report this information, we also asked if participating choice schools should comply with any operating guidelines. In our school-based interviews several respondents mentioned that schools should comply with various operating guidelines. In our interviews with community respondents many of these issues dominated the discussion. However, this interest did not correlate with any consensus over whether these should be specific compliance requirements. Because these compliance requirements are contentious, we believe they should be studied carefully. In Table 11 we list the questions we asked in the taxpayer survey and the percent who agreed with the statement.

Table 11. Percentage of Respondents Who Agree with Selected Operating Guidelines for Private Choice Schools by Income Level.

Guideline	Low	Middle	High	Total
A. Hire only state certified teachers	75	72	78	73
B. Hold public meetings	88	86	84	86
C. Admit students selectively	29*	36*	41*	35
D. Charge fees in addition to taxpayer contribution	53*	72*	73*	66
A. Require parents to volunteer at school	69	65	68	66

Note: An asterisk indicates a statistically significant difference between groups.

We found that a large percentage of taxpayers believed that private schools participating in choice should hire only state certified teachers (73%). In addition, we found that 86% of taxpayers surveyed believed that private schools participating in a choice program should make their meetings open to the public. Three-quarters of the school-based respondents we interviewed also felt that information should be made public, with the exception of individual student records. These issues need to be considered when developing accountability guidelines.

Approximately one-third of those interviewed believed that private schools should be allowed to choose which students they will enroll. Wealthier taxpayers are more likely to support allowing schools to choose students, (41% as compared to 36% for our middle income group and 29% for our lowest income group). However, even among those in the wealthiest category, the majority of respondents do not support allowing participating private schools to choose who they enroll. In addition, two-thirds of those surveyed believed that participating schools should be able to charge for those costs not covered by the taxpayer contribution. Our survey data also indicate that approximately 66% of those surveyed believed participating schools should be able to require parents to work as volunteers as a condition for their child's continued enrollment.

Dominant Themes

Several dominant themes emerge from our survey data. First, Ohio and Wisconsin taxpayers want all private schools participating in school choice to make public certain information about their school. Ten of fifteen possible types of information were each selected for mandatory reporting by at least 60% of the sampled taxpayers (see Table 7). The top four choices, each selected by between 75 and 85% of the taxpayers, were the

qualifications of teachers and administrators, how the school's money is budgeted and spent, the school's graduation rate, and the students' state standardized test scores. In contrast, taxpayers from both states considered it relatively unimportant to make public the racial, ethic, or socio-economic composition of the schools' student bodies, as only about one-third selected these items for mandatory public reporting.

Second, this strong endorsement of public disclosure was made regardless of taxpayer differences in race, income level, or overall attitude toward school choice. The only exception was that two-thirds of African American taxpayers also wanted each school's requirements for parental involvement to be reported.

Third, three out of four individuals in Ohio and Wisconsin support creating a public board representing both private choice schools and public schools to gather and report information about schools. Taxpayers from both states do not support a privately run parent information center or having individual parents gather this information. Only one-third of those surveyed support these options.

Fourth, taxpayers in Ohio and Wisconsin appear to support allowing choice schools extra time to adhere to these mandatory reporting requirements. Eighty-three percent of those surveyed support a one year probationary period to allow a school to comply with the reporting requirements.

Finally, other themes surfaced with significant support. We found majority support for open meetings, parent involvement requirements, allowing schools to charge for costs above those covered by tuition, an open enrollment system and licensure of teachers.

Consensus View: Suggested Accountability Guidelines

At the outset, the purpose of this study was to search for a consensus on the important issue of choice school accountability. However, given the perceived wide gap between the opposing sides, we were only moderately optimistic that a consensus could be reached. Thus, it is encouraging and very enlightening that, in a study that included 295 face-to-face interviews and 771 telephone surveys, we were able to discover and now propose a set of accountability guidelines that reflect a consensus among diverse sets of people.

These guidelines were developed through lengthy analysis of the school and community interviews and taxpayer surveys by our expert panel. The guidelines reflect consensus areas in which the panel felt there was a strong convergence of support. For each guideline we include the rationale for its formation and possible means for implementing it. We offer them to policy makers who may tackle the controversial task of creating and enacting guidelines.

Guideline 1. Schools that participate in choice need to make public the following information.[23]

- *Curriculum*
- *Graduation rate*
- *How money is budgeted and spent*
- *Methods of teaching*
- *Mission and philosophy of a school*
- *Number of students suspended and expelled annually*
- *Qualifications of teachers and administrators*
- *School's governing structure*
- *Scores on state standardized tests*
- *Student attendance rate*

Rationale: In our taxpayer surveys each subject received support from at least 60% of those surveyed. In our face-to-face interviews information on the school's program, primarily its curriculum and method of instruction, are the most common kinds of information valued by parents. Information on teachers is the next most important for parents (See Table 3). The other criteria mentioned are school characteristics, such as class size and make-up of student body; general student outcomes, such as development of lifetime skills and advancement to the next grade level; safety and discipline at the school; standardized test scores; level of parent involvement and the school's reputation.[24] Parents selecting schools want this type of information and taxpayers who are providing the funds for these schools believe this information should be mandatory.

Possible Implementation: A school participating in school choice could produce an annual report containing this information. However, the scope and depth of additional information put out by the school should remain discretionary. For example, when reporting teacher qualifications, a school may want to report educational backgrounds, licensure, teaching experience and evaluations.

Guideline 2. A public board consisting of representatives of private choice schools and public schools should be created to gather the required information about choice schools and make it available to the public.

Rationale: In the school-based interviews we found that individuals supported a privately run parent information center, an accreditation agency or the state department of education for this responsibility. In our community interviews we found proponents of choice advocating for the creation of a public board with representation from both the choice and public school community. The opponents of choice were more likely to support the state department of education. In our final survey we found overwhelming support for the public board with mixed representation from the private and public schools.

Possible Implementation: A board could be appointed from a list of candidates representing well respected individuals from both the private and public educational community. The appointing authority could be the state through the governor or the appropriate department involved with education. Funding for staff probably would be required as it will be necessary to compile, collate, make public the information and possibly review for accuracy. The board must be viewed as nonpartisan and unbiased if it is to be respected and believed. Because of that, it should not be an enforcement agency.

Guideline 3. Private choice schools that do not follow the reporting requirements should be granted a one-year probationary period in order to meet the requirement. Failure to comply after one year should result in loss of taxpayer funds.

Rationale: One of the fundamental points that choice supporters often make is that poor schools will fail and that this is the ultimate form of accountability. However, we found across both supporters and opponents of choice in our interviews and surveys the desire to foster the start-up and participation of choice schools by giving a school time to get established. There was overwhelming support for granting a probationary period of one year to a school in order to meet the requirements. Of those surveyed 83% supported this option. There was mixed support for having the school lose its eligibility for taxpayer money (57%) and even less support (37%) for fining to the school.

Possible Implementation: Enforcement probably could be a function of a state department of education or public instruction. Information triggering enforcement could come from the public/private information board.

Divergent Views: Participation Requirements

The receipt of public money by a private institution changes the issue of accountability. The important question is how are the accountability needs of parents and taxpayers satisfied without overly burdening private schools. After lengthy analysis and discussion of the interview and survey data there are several areas in which our panel is unable to recommend a consensus on accountability.

Issue 1. Should schools participating in choice be allowed to require parents to work as volunteers in the school?

Discussion: Schools in Cleveland and Milwaukee that participate in choice are free to establish requirements for parent involvement as a condition for admission. Currently a number of schools participating in choice in both Cleveland and Milwaukee require parents to volunteer time as a part of their admission requirement. As one administrator stated, "We have a straightforward pledge sheet for 20 hours of parent involvement. Some families have been and will be asked to leave if they are chronic about not contributing." Others view the issue of requiring parent involvement as a barrier to

participation by some families. Schools have various ways of dealing with noncompliance from a fine to no longer letting a child participate in the program.

Because of the controversy that surrounds this issue, we explored the interest in parent involvement both in our interviews with school and community respondents and in our taxpayer surveys. In our school-based interviews we found limited interest in wanting information on parent involvement and/or the requirements for parent involvement. In our community respondent interviews we found considerable interest in the issue of requiring parents to volunteer in a school but no consensus over the issue. Because of this strong interest, we included this question in our survey design. We first asked whether it should mandatory for participating schools to report the requirements for parent involvement. A majority of African Americans support reporting this information (64% compared to 46% of whites). In addition we also asked taxpayers in our telephone survey the following question: *"Whether they agreed or disagreed with the following statement: Private schools that participate in a choice program should be allowed to require parents to work as volunteers in the school."* Over 65% of the total respondents agreed.

Issue 2. Should schools participating in choice be required to make their meetings open to the public?

Discussion: A general attitude was apparent in our parent information interviews and in our surveys that what happens in private schools that accept taxpayer money should be public. Three out of four school-based respondents indicated that nothing should be kept private, except for individual student records. Several community respondents indicated the need for openness when schools accept public money. However, other community respondents argued that there is no benefit to opening up all meetings to the general public. As one community respondent stated, "Parents can find out the information they need when they want it." However, opponents of choice often stated that schools that accept public money should be held to the same open records and open meetings laws as public schools. In our survey 86% of taxpayers in Ohio and Wisconsin indicated that they believe private schools that accept public money should make their meeting open to the public.

Issue 3. Should schools that participate in choice be allowed to charge parents for the costs above those covered by the taxpayer contribution?

Discussion: The issue of charging students who receive vouchers or scholarships for the costs above those covered by the taxpayer contribution is one that Cleveland and Milwaukee deal with differently. Currently, in Cleveland the scholarship covers between 75-90% of the tuition with the participant's family responsible for paying the additional tuition. In Milwaukee participating choice schools are not allowed to charge tuition above that covered by the voucher. Some individuals we interviewed believed strongly that private schools participating in choice must be allowed to charge for costs above that covered by the voucher. As one proponent stated, "We propose that an enrollment fee of

no more than $50 per family would not be too onerous for them and would add value in their eyes to the education their children are receiving. Successful schools have been built on parents sacrificing something." (statements made at Wisconsin Assembly Hearing of the Committee on Urban Education, February 28, 1996). Other proponents have argued that participating schools should not be able to charge such fees. In our taxpayer survey we found disagreement between African Americans and whites over the issue of charging additional fees. Less than a majority (43%) of African Americans support charging fees compared to 66% of whites.

Issue 4. When choice schools get more applicants than they have vacancies, should they be allowed to choose which applicants they will enroll or should they be required to conduct a lottery?

Discussion: There is some disagreement over whether schools participating in choice should adhere to strict policies ensuring non-discrimination based on religion, gender, disability, prior academic achievement and prior student behavior.[25] Opponents of choice argue that selection systems that allow schools to choose who they enroll will lead to inequality in education. Some proponents, on the other hand, believe that schools should be able to set certain admissions standards as long as they do not discriminate on the basis of race and ethnicity. In our interviews we found a strong desire by both proponents and opponents of choice to require a random admission process for choice schools. Our survey results indicate that 61% of those surveyed believe choice schools should use a random admission system. Approximately 70% of the respondents making less than $25,000 a year agree with requiring choice schools to choose students using a random admission system. Currently, the choice application guidelines for both Cleveland and Milwaukee contain provisions ensuring that if there are more applicants than spaces a lottery system will be used to choose students.

Issue 5. Should schools that participate in choice hire only state certified (or licensed) teachers?

Discussion: The issue of certification or licensure, as it is more commonly referred to, is one that must be carefully scrutinized. Private schools participating in choice in Cleveland and Milwaukee are currently able to hire teachers without requiring licensure. However, as one private choice school administrator stated, "It would difficult for me to recommend to our personnel committee hiring a teacher who is not certified. The person would have to have some special skills that would permit me to recommend the person." There is no consistent support for requiring schools that participate in choice to hire only state licensed teachers. In our school-based interviews, parents are unlikely to mention certification as the only means for judging the qualifications of teachers. In addition, in our community respondent interviews individuals disagree on the issue of certification. Several proponents of choice believe that certification is a poor way to judge the qualifications of teachers. However, a number of opponents of choice believe that certification is necessary for ensuring that qualified teachers work in schools participating in choice. Finally, our taxpayer survey data overwhelmingly support this requirement.

Conclusion

Examining the need for accountability for private schools that accept public money is the driving force behind the research presented in this report. We began this research by going to those individuals directly affected by school choice in Cleveland and Milwaukee and letting them tell us what kinds of information they needed to know about a school. This information was used to create the survey questionnaire that was administered to 771 adults in Ohio and Wisconsin.

The data we gathered through our interviews and surveys has led to a consensus for the creation of three specific guidelines on what types of information should be reported; who should gather and report this information, and what consequences should be in place if a school fails to follow the guidelines. We believe that these guidelines satisfy the information needs of parents and the collective needs of taxpayers for holding private schools that accept public money accountable. As policy makers grapple with the important issue of school choice accountability we hope that the guidelines presented in this report can help inform that debate.

We have also explored many issues related to requirements for schools that wish to participate in school choice. We find several areas worthy of further study, analysis and debate. On the issues of parental involvement requirements, open meetings, charging of additional fees, admission policies and teacher certification we were unable to find a consensus. If policy makers explore these issues they must find answers that satisfy two needs: first, the need expressed by many individuals we interviewed that the guidelines do not overly restrict the operation of school choice, and, second, the need expressed by many others to ensure that taxpayer money is used wisely.

ENDNOTES

[1] The panel was chaired by Dr. Mary P. Hoy, Dean of the School of Education at Marquette University, and Dr. William Harvey, Dean of the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Members of the panel included: Dr. Michele Foster, Claremont Graduate School; Dr. Paul T. Hill, University of Washington; Dr. Mary Huba, Iowa State University; Dr. William Morgan, Cleveland State University; Dr. S.E. Phillips, Michigan State University; and Dr. Amy Stuart Wells, University of California, Los Angeles.

[2] The basic idea of educational vouchers or school choice was first presented in a 1955 article by Milton Friedman. In this type of program public money is transferred on a per-student basis to private schools.

[3] Interviews with the author January and March, 1997.

[4] School administrators include principals, assistant principals, headmasters, business managers as well as other individuals holding various titles who have a role in the day to day management of schools. At the outset of this study we intended to have students play a major role as stakeholders in this study. However, at the time of this study, all of the choice participants in Cleveland were between kindergarten and third grade, and in Milwaukee the majority of participants were below the fifth grade. For this reason, we did not interview students.

[5] We define taxpayers as anyone over the age of 17 who resides in Ohio or Wisconsin. We specifically asked in the survey for the adult who celebrated the most recent birthday and asked them to answer from a taxpayer perspective.

[6] The five Cleveland public schools are: Anton Grdina Elementary, Central Middle School, Newton D. Baker, South High School and Tremont Elementary. The Cleveland private choice schools are: Hope Central Academy, Hope Ohio City Academy, Mt. Pleasant Elementary, Saint Adalbert, and Saint Thomas/Saint Phillip. The public schools in Milwaukee are: 53rd St. Elementary, Curtin Elementary, Juneau High School, Maryland Avenue Elementary and Parkview Elementary. The five private choice schools in Milwaukee are: Bruce Guadalupe, Harambee, Learning Enterprise Institute of Wisconsin, Urban Day and Woodlands Elementary. Please contact the author for further information on how the schools were selected. We contacted the administrators and five teachers affiliated with each of these schools. We also targeted ten parent interviews from each school. In order to ensure a broader sample of parents, we also interviewed parents at a school expo in Milwaukee. In addition, we interviewed a randomly selected group of parents from those that applied to the Cleveland Scholarship Program.

[7] Cleveland Public Schools (CPS) serves approximately 70,000 students. Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) serves approximately 103,000 students. These school districts have many factors in common. Both serve large urban areas with high levels of children who live in poverty. More than 40% of the children in Cleveland live in poverty, and 38% of the children in Milwaukee live in poverty (1990 Census). Of those children that attend MPS, approximately 66% are eligible for free or reduced lunch. In both school districts, approximately 60% of the student body is African American, 5% Asian, and 12% Hispanic.

[8] Our interviewers were students at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM) and Cleveland State University (CSU). They were chosen based on their previous interviewing experience and understanding of social science research methods. The interviewers went through a training session conducted by the staff of the Public Policy Forum. In addition, the interviewers were provided with information on the school choice program in the respective cities. The interviews were not tape recorded. The interviewer was required to write down the responses made by the interviewee and then entered the responses into a password encoded database located on the internet. This method of data entry insured almost immediate access to the interview data. The team at CSU was directed by Ann Thornton with the assistance of Tyree Ayers, Ronnie Dunn, Margaret Gerba and Tobey Manns. The UWM interviewers were Jackie Champagne, Audra Grant, Jolene Jesse, Ann Lorman, Dayna Velasco and Emily Van Dunk.

[9] We wanted to involve the direct stakeholders as much as possible in this study. While we are interested in the views of elected officials and other individuals who are actively involved in school choice we were very careful not to have their viewpoints be overemphasized. For this reason we only interviewed 25 individuals representing the second group of stakeholders

[10] The categorization of this data involved taking hundreds of responses and breaking each down into what can be termed databits. These databits are the phrases or words within the response that can be grouped together into categories. Two levels of categorization took place. First, each response was broken into phrases and words. The next step involved taking these phrases and grouping them into the final categories that we labeled school program, school characteristics, teachers, general outcomes, test score outcomes, safety/discipline, parent involvement, reputation and school characteristics. In order to clarify this process we include the following example.

A public school parent responded to this question 1: "*Two of my children are special needs kids and it is important to me that I find a program that works for my kids. I believe each child is different and that no one school will work for every child. One of my children needed traditional schools and the other did not. The method of teaching is important to me and it is important to understand if your child will fit into that program. I am very interested in the style of teaching because each child learns differently.*"

From this response we take out the following databits: 1. focus of the school i.e., traditional; 2. meeting individual needs of children; 3. method of teaching; It is important to sift through the response sorting through some repetition. These three databits were sorted into the following categories: focus of school i.e., traditional, School Program; method of teaching, School Program; meeting individual needs, Outcomes General. The final coding for this parent would include the factors School Program and Outcomes General. While the parent mentioned two School Program databits, we are looking at the

percentage of respondents who mentioned a particular category, not the number of responses for each category. We believe that in this way we are not over-weighting particular categories.
The final categories include the following databits: School Program: method of teaching, course offerings, bilingual offerings, multicultural curriculum, challenging curriculum, foreign language offerings, hands-on-learning, innovative teaching, job preparation courses, mission and philosophy of school, focus of the school, advanced course offerings, special needs course offerings, expectations of school program, field trip offerings, honors program offerings. Teachers: character of teachers, educational degrees of teachers, gender of teachers, how the teachers treat the children, qualifications and experience of teachers, race/ethnicity of teachers, retention rate of teachers, accountability of teachers for student learning, teacher's moral values, ability of the teacher to motivate students, the certification of teachers, and the staff development opportunities for teachers. Outcomes General: development of cognitive skills, development of creative skills, development of lifetime skills, grade point average, graduation rate from high school, amount of homework, meeting individual needs of child, grade advancement, study habits school encourages, the grading process, where alumni end up, Is my child learning? Do my kids like it? Outcomes Test Scores: Standardized test scores. School Characteristics: Atmosphere of the school, attendance rate, attrition rate of students, classroom size, make-up of student body, history of school, cultural diversity of school, number of students, student teacher ratio, ratio of teachers to assistants. Safety and Discipline: amount of violence in schools, appearance of outside community, code of discipline, security procedures in place at school, level of disciplinary actions. Reputation of School: recommendations of teachers and other parents, reputation of the school, does the school rank as one of the best? Parent Involvement: Ability to go in and talk with teacher, open communication between parent and teacher, how involved parents are with the school, parental satisfaction, requirements for parental involvement, if training is offered for parents, can parents work with school to improve it, what committees are run by parents?

[11] Any errors are the sole responsibility of the primary researcher, Emily Van Dunk.

[12] We contracted Lein/Spiegelhoff, Inc., a survey research company in Brookfield, Wisconsin to interview residents in Ohio and Wisconsin. We sampled the adult in a household who "...celebrated the most recent birthday." If the person was not available a callback was setup. Three callbacks were conducted. Because recent polls indicate that 86.5% of African Americans aged 26-35 support school choice (See Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, August 1997), we wanted to ensure that we had a representative sample of African Americans to examine differences that may exist by race. For this reason, we decided to over-sample the African Americans in Ohio and Wisconsin. We first conducted a random digit dialing with no over-sampling for race. This gave us a sample with 7.21% African Americans in Ohio and 2.23% African Americans in Wisconsin. Our over-sample resulted in 12.5% African Americans in each state. To obtain 771 interviews required 6,244 telephone numbers. Approximately 20% of the attempts resulted in a refusal; other interviews were not completed because the interviewer reached an answering machine or voice mail, non-working or disconnected number, a busy signal, fax machine, a business number or government number.

[13] The population estimates represent the latest available estimates from the census general population survey. We feel that the sample population is representative of the estimated population in all cases except for African Americans in Wisconsin. For this reason, we ran the analyses by weighting the African Americans in Wisconsin to represent the population. This did not change the frequencies in most cases. Where it did change, the effect was less than 0.1%. Because the results were not affected we chose to use the unweighted frequencies in all of the tables.

[14] This number represents the sum of those who support this program for low-income parents only and those who support this program for any child regardless of their parent's income. The percent agreeing with these statements are 23% and 53% respectively.

[15] This is an average across both Ohio and Wisconsin. The percent agreeing with this statement for each state was: Ohio—77% and Wisconsin—74%.

[16] If the interviewee asked the following definitions of mandatory and voluntary were read. Mandatory- must be reported by a private school participating in a school choice program. Voluntary- up to the individual schools participating in a school choice program to report.

[17] The items were rotated in order to limit the possibility of bias toward options at the end of the response list. The percentage of Don't Know or Refusal responses for each item varied from 1% for Item F., How Money is Budgeted and Spent to 4.7% for Item O. Teacher Turnover.

[18] We report only those differences that were statistically significant at the .05 level of probability. Our income group contained three categories, low, medium and high. Low is defined as households with less than $24,999 in annual income (N=174), middle income is defined as those households between $25,000 and 39,000 in annual income. (N=362) and high is defined as those households with greater than $40,000 in annual household income (N=120). Less than 3.4% of those surveyed chose a racial or ethnic category other than white or African American. Because this small sample size makes it impossible to examine group differences, we group this 3.4 % with white for purposes of analysis,. We did run the frequencies by excluding this 3.4%, but did not see any significant changes in the frequencies. Because we did not want to lose data by selecting out these 3.4% the white category includes this other category.

[19] We used responses to Question 9 on our survey to measure support or opposition to school choice.

[20] We also looked at differences by parents who send their children to private schools and parents whose children go to public schools. Our sample includes 398 parents with a total of 575 children. Of these children 17%, or 97 children attend private schools in Ohio and Wisconsin. This percentage is representative of the percent of children in Ohio and Wisconsin who attend private school. We found no statistically significant differences between these groups.

[21] The percentage of Don't Know or Refusal responses for each item varied from 4% for item A to 8% for item F.

[22] We examined group differences across income, race and support for school choice. While we found some statistically significant differences in levels of support, the level of majority support did not change. For example, Opponents of school choice were less likely to support a privately run parent information center (27% compared to 40%). Opponents were also less likely to support the private choice schools themselves, (32% compared to 46%). Finally, opponents were less likely to support the individual parents themselves, rather than an organization (20% compared to 37%). When we asked whether there are any differences in support for various reporting organizations by income, our results indicate that individuals in the wealthiest category were least likely to support a privately run parent information center (24% for high income compared to 38% for medium income and 44% for low income). However, across all income groups less than a majority supported this option. We found little support among high income respondents for having no organization be responsible and leaving the responsibility up to the parents, (21% for high income compared to 33% for medium income and 41% for low income). Again less than a majority across all income groups supported this option. Finally there were mixed levels of support across income groups for giving the state department of education this responsibility (50% for high income compared to 60% for low income).

[23] Order is alphabetical and does not indicate importance.

[24] Fifty-five percent of taxpayers in Ohio and Wisconsin said that information on class size should be mandatory. In our school-based interviews this piece of information was important. We believe that in terms of information needs of parents class size is a commonly requested item. However, in terms of accountability information this item did not make the cut off of 60% for a consensus item. This was also true regarding teacher turnover. This item was supported by 55% of taxpayers in Ohio and Wisconsin. In addition, in our survey we found support for both "How Money was Budgeted and Spent" and the "Results of Annual Financial Audit." We believe these items cover the same types of information. Finally, we do not include mandatory reporting of parent involvement as a part of guideline 1. It is important to note that a majority of African Americans (64%) supported this requirement. We believe that further discussion of whether this item should be a part of reporting requirements is warranted.

[25] Currently, choice schools in Milwaukee are exempted from the Education for All Handicapped Children Act.

Appendix A.

Choice School Accountability
Interview Questions

Interview Data

Name of Interviewer:_____

Date of Interview:_____

Time Interview Started:_____

Time Interview Ended: _____

School Affiliation of Interviewee:_____

Name of Interviewee (for coding purposes only) **will not be released!**

_____

Stakeholder Group (Circle One: If individual is from two or more stakeholder groups choose the one that they are representing for purposes of this interview)

01 School Administrator
02 Teacher/Counselor
03 Parent
04 Student
05 School Board Member
06 State Legislator
07 Member of Business Community
08 Member of Teacher's Association
09 Member of Private Choice Organization

Introduction

Hi my name is: _____.

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed for this research project.

The purpose of this interview is threefold.

First, I am interested in finding out what it is you as a parent, (or teacher believe parents) want to know about a school in order to make a decision about where to send your own child.

Second, I am also interested in finding out how you evaluate this information (or believe parents can) compare this information across schools.

Third, I am interested in understanding how you believe you and others can obtain this information.

There are no right or wrong answers. We are hoping to get many points of view.

Information from these interviews will be used to help develop a questionnaire on this subject for a survey of taxpayers in Milwaukee and Cleveland. The information you provide along with a number of other parents, teachers and administrators in Milwaukee and Cleveland will be used to develop possible guidelines for school choice accountability. The findings will then be shared with public policy makers who will make decisions about evaluating choice schools.

What is school choice?

- While there are a number of ways that school choice has been defined we are using the following definition of school choice for this study.

- In this type of program public money is transferred to private schools. What this essentially means is that parents or schools are given a sum of money, to be used toward the tuition at a private school. In Milwaukee this sum equals $4,400 per student and the parents cannot be charged more if tuition is higher. In Cleveland the sum of money equals between 90 percent and 75 percent of tuition, depending on the income of the parent.

- As of today, the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program and the Cleveland Scholarship Program are the only two private school choice programs which transfer public money to private schools on a per-student basis.

We appreciate the time you are taking to be part of this study and want you to understand that, while your name will remain confidential, the information you provide will be a critical component of any accountability guidelines that may be created.

Interview Questions

1. I would like to start out asking about your school. Could you describe to me a little about your school and what you believe is special about your school?

2. In a perfect world, what would you want to know about schools in order to make a decision about where to send your own children?

3. Is there anything you feel you need to know about the financial condition of a school?
   Possible information to provide the interviewee: Do you look for information on the financial health of a school? How money is spent? How much the budget is? How much a school is dependent on tuition? Whether a school is sponsored by a business? The amount of tuition? When tuition is paid? The per-pupil spending at a school? Whether a school is certified for title 1 grant money? Etc...,

4. Is there anything you feel you need to know about the educational program offered at a school?

5. Is there anything you need to know about student achievement? If yes, what do you look for?

6. Is there anything you feel you need to know about the types of values developed at a school? (This can be broken down into several things, moral, religious, social.)

7. Is there anything you need to know about the teachers and administration at a school?

8. Is there anything you need to know about the rules at a school and/or the enforcement of discipline at a school?

9. Is there anything you need to know about parent involvement in a school? Do you look for information on opportunities or requirements for parent involvement at a school? What kind of information do you want?

10. What would you like to know about the admissions policy of a school?

11. How would you want to get the information we have been talking about?

12. Are there any kinds of information you think a school should be able to keep private? If yes, what? (Private can be defined in many ways: we are referring to information that would not be released to the public.)

13. Should information that would make it possible to compare schools be available to the public? What types of information do you think should be compared?
    If yes, how should the public get this information?

14. If a parent is dissatisfied with a school what should they be able to do about it?

15. Here is a list of ideas that have been suggested for gathering and reporting information that could be used to evaluate choice schools. Please check off as many of these as you support. (Refer to Attachment.)

Who Should Be Responsible for Gathering Information

Schools are accredited through a private accreditation agency.

☐ Agree ☐ Disagree

Privately run parent information center is created to collect and distribute information about schools.

☐ Agree ☐ Disagree

The state department of education.

☐ Agree ☐ Disagree

The private schools themselves.

☐ Agree ☐ Disagree

No agency needs to be responsible. Individual parents will decide for themselves and poor schools will fail.

☐ Agree ☐ Disagree

Appendix B.

Choice School Accountability
Survey Questions

Introduction:

Hello. My Name is _____ and I'm calling from Lein/Spiegelhoff. We're conducting a public opinion survey on schools and school choice. This is not a sales effort of any type.

For this survey I need to speak to (the adult 18 years or older who lives in this household and celebrated the most recent B-day) Are you that person? (IF PERSON LIVES IN THE HOUSEHOLD AND CELEBRATED THE LAST BIRTHDAY IS NOT AVAILABLE, SETUP A CALLBACK)

Attitudes about Education

I'd like to begin by asking you to grade the public schools in your community. How well do you think they do their job. Would you give the public schools in your community a grade of A,B,C,D or Fail or Don't Know?

A. B. C. D. F. Don't Know.

Now I'd like to ask you to grade the private school or schools in your community according to how well you think the schools are doing their job? Would you give the private school or schools in your community a grade of A,B,C,D or Fail or Don't Know?

A. B. C. D. F. Don't Know.

Accountability Requirements

Read for Wisconsin surveys: In Wisconsin some low-income parents receive money to pay tuition at private schools that are referred to as choice schools.

Read for Ohio surveys: In Ohio some low-income parents receive money to help pay tuition at private schools that are referred to as choice schools.

I would like to read a list of things that choice schools might be asked to report to the public.

3. Please tell me whether you ***as a taxpayer*** think it should be voluntary or mandatory for a private choice school to report the information to the public. Do you feel it should be voluntary or mandatory for private choice schools to report (READ FIRST ITEM BELOW) to the public. (INTERVIEWER READ DEFINITIONS ONLY IF NECESSARY: VOLUNTARY (UP TO THE INDIVIDUAL SCHOOLS PARTICIPATING IN A SCHOOL CHOICE PROGRAM.) MANDATORY (MUST BE REPORTED BY A PRIVATE SCHOOL PARTICIPATING IN A SCHOOL CHOICE PROGRAM.)

READ AND ROTATE

a. The class size	Voluntary	Mandatory	DK
b. The curriculum	Voluntary	Mandatory	DK
c. The economic background of the student body	Voluntary	Mandatory	DK
d. The educational qualifications of teachers & administrators	Voluntary	Mandatory	DK
e. The graduation rate	Voluntary	Mandatory	DK
f. How money is budgeted and spent	Voluntary	Mandatory	DK

g. The methods of teaching	Voluntary	Mandatory	DK
f. The mission and philosophy of a school	Voluntary	Mandatory	DK
h. The number of students suspended and expelled annually	Voluntary	Mandatory	DK
i. The racial or ethnic makeup of the student body	Voluntary	Mandatory	DK
j. The results of an annual financial audit	Voluntary	Mandatory	DK
k. The school's governing structure	Voluntary	Mandatory	DK
l. The scores on state standardized tests given to students.	Voluntary	Mandatory	DK
m. Student attendance rate	Voluntary	Mandatory	DK
n. Teacher turnover	Voluntary	Mandatory	DK
o. The requirements for parent involvement	Voluntary	Mandatory	DK
p. Where graduates go	Voluntary	Mandatory	DK

If private choice schools are required to report information to the public, somebody has to gather this information and make it available.

4. Do you think (READ FIRST ORGANIZATION LIST BELOW) should be given this job?

READ AND ROTATE

a. A public board consisting of representatives from both private choice schools and public schools.

YES
NO
DK (OPTIONS REPEATED FOR EACH ORGANIZATION)

b. The state department of education.

c. A privately run parent information center.

d. The private choice school themselves, rather than an organization.

e. A coordinating council made up of representatives of private choice schools.

f. An accreditation agency, which is a membership organization that grants accreditation status to schools.

g. Individual parents themselves, rather than an organization.

5. Of these organizations please tell me which is the one you believe is the best one to be responsible for this task. I will read to you the list (RECORD ONE ANSWER).

1. A public board consisting of representatives from both private choice schools and public schools
2. The state department of education
3. A parent information center
4. The private choice school themselves, rather than an organization
5. A coordinating council of representatives of private choice schools
6. An accreditation agency
7. Parents themselves, rather than an organization

6. In your opinion should schools that meet the mandatory reporting requirements be eligible for increased taxpayer money?

YES
NO
DK (OPTIONS REPEATED FOR EACH QUESTION)

7. In your opinion what should be done if a school does **not** follow the mandated reporting requirements?

READ AND ROTATE ITEMS a-c.

a. Should the school be granted a one-year probationary period in order to meet the requirement?
b. Should a fine be given to the school?
c. Should the school lose their eligibility for taxpayer money?

IF RESPONDENT ANSWERED NO (CODE 2) AND/OR DK (CODE 3) TO a-c ASK d, ALL OTHERS SKIP TO Q8

d. Should nothing be done, parents should decide if they want to continue to enroll their children in the school?

School Choice

8. In order to understand how people feel about a number of issues surrounding school choice, I would now like to read a few statements about school choice. Please tell me whether you agree, disagree or have no opinion.

a. "Providing tax money to parents to allow their children to attend a private school will improve the quality of education."

1. agree
2. disagree
3. don't know (REPEAT OPTIONS FOR EACH QUESTION)

b. "Private schools participating in a choice program should be required to hire only state certified teachers."

c. "Private schools participating in a choice program should be required to make their meetings open to the public."

d. "Private schools participating in a choice program should be allowed to choose which students they will enroll."

e. "Private schools participating in a choice program should be able to operate with as little government regulation as possible."

f. "Private schools that participate in a choice program should be allowed to charge parents for costs above those covered by the taxpayer contribution."

g. "Private schools that participate in a choice program should be allowed to require parents to work as volunteers in the school."

h. "The success of private schools participating in a choice program should be primarily judged on parent satisfaction?"

i. "The success of schools participating in a choice program should be primarily judged on the basis of standardized test scores?"

j. "Religious schools should be allowed to participate in a choice program?"

j. "Private religious schools that participate in a choice program should be allowed to require parents to attend church?"

9. Which of these statements best describes your opinion of providing tax money to parents to allow their children to attend private schools.

1. I favor this program only under the condition that the tax money is provided to low-income parents.
2. I favor this program for any child regardless of their parent's income.
3. I oppose this program.
4. None of the above.
5. DK

10a. Read for Wisconsin: In Wisconsin state law establishes the school choice program for low income parents in the Milwaukee school district only. We would like to know your opinion on whether or not the school choice program should be expanded to include all school districts in the state of Wisconsin. **Please respond yes or no.**
10b. Read for Ohio: In Ohio state law establishes the school choice program for low income parents in the Cleveland school district only. We would like to know your opinion on whether or not the school choice program should be expanded to include all school districts in the state of Ohio? **Please respond yes or no.**

Yes
No
DK

Personal Information

For statistical purposes only I would like to ask you some information about yourself. All of your answers are confidential:

11. Please tell me your zipcode

12. Do you have any persons in your household under age 18?

13. How many children in your household are in kindergarten through 12th grade?

14. Are you the parent of any of these children? (If no skip to Q18.)

15. How many children do you have attending private schools? (If greater than 0 skip to Q18.)

16. If you had to pay only 10 percent of the tuition and the public paid the rest, would you consider sending your child to a private school? (If yes skip to Q18.)

17. If you were given a voucher equal to the amount of tuition at a private school, would you consider sending your child to a private school?

18. How often do you vote in school elections? This includes both school board elections and bond referenda.

1. Always
2. Sometimes
3. Rarely

4. Never

19. Do you consider yourself politically: (READ AND ROTATE)

1. moderate
2. conservative
3. liberal

20. What political party do you tend to vote for the most: (READ AND ROTATE)

1. Republicans
2. Democrats
3. Neither

21. What is your level of education?

1. Less than high school
2. High School Graduate
3. Some College
4. College Graduate
5. Post College Work

22. Are any of the adults in your household members of a union?

1. Yes
2. No
3. DK

23. In what year were you born?_____

24. Which of the following ethnic groups do you identify with:

1. African American
2. American Indian
3. Asian
4. Hispanic
5. White
6. or some other_____

25. What is your religious preference, Catholic, Jewish, Protestant, Muslim, some other religion, or no religion:

1. Catholic
2. Jewish
3. Protestant
4. No religious belief
5. Other_____

26. About how often do you go to a place of worship?

1. More than once a week
2. Once a week
3. Less than once a week but at least once a month
4. Less than once a month but at least once a year
5. Never

6. DK

27. We'd like to know what category your household income for 1996 falls into. Please stop me when I reach your income group for 1996.

1. $14,999 or less
2. $15,000-24,999
3. $25,000-39,000
4. $40,000 59,000
5. $60,000-79,000
6. $80 or more
7. DK

Thank you very much for your help.

28. Record gender:

1. male
2. female

RECORD LIST:

1. Wisconsin
2. Ohio

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